(c) and (d) Indiatourism offices overseas undertake various promotional activities such as participation in trade and consumer fairs, road shows and exhibitions, advertising in print, electronic, outdoors and interactive media, printing and distribution of brochures and co-laterals in the local languages and joint advertising with travel trade and tour operators in order to promote the diverse tourism attractions of different regions and States of Indian, including Himachal Pradesh. Various tourism products, including medical and adventure tourism, are promoted by Indiatourism offices through these activities.

Identification of farmers for waiving of loans

†*332. SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ:
SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) by when the farmers eligible for waiving of loans will be identified under waiving of loans programme for 2007-08 by the Central Government;

(b) by when the farmers' amount of loans will be deducted after identifying the farmers eligible for waiving of loans; and

(c) by when the farmers will become eligible for taking institutional loans again after waiving of their loans?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c) As announced in the Budget Speech, the implementation of the Agricultural Debt Waiver and Relief scheme will be completed by 30.06.2008. After being granted debt waiver or signing an agreement for debt relief under the OTS Scheme, the farmers will become eligible for availing of fresh agricultural loans from the credit institutions in accordance with normal rules.

Constitution of the Competition Commission

*333. SHRI HARISH RAWAT:
SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN:

Will the Minister of CORPORATE AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Competition Commission has been fully constituted;

(b) if so, the details of the members alongwith their academic and professional background;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether the mandate of the Competition Commission overlaps with the terms of reference of various Sector-specific independent regulators;

(e) what steps have been taken to avoid such overlapping of mandates; and

(f) the details of linkage between the independent regulators and the Competition Commission?

THE MINISTER OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS (SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

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† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) The Competition Act, 2002 faced a legal challenge. During the period the issues arising out the said legal challenge were under the consideration of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, the Competition Commission could not be fully operationalised. Finally, the amendments necessary to address the legal challenge were effected through the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007. Subsequently, the process of operationalization of the Competition Commission has been taken up, including notification of rules under the Act, as amended, and provision of necessary personnel and infrastructure etc., and is currently in progress.

(d) to (f) In the course of a proceeding before any statutory regulator, including the Competition Commission, matters may come up having a bearing both on competition and matters regulated by the concerned sector specific regulator. In such cases, under the provisions of sections 21 and 21A of the Competition Act, 2002, as amended, the concerned regulator or the Competition Commission, may, as the case may be, make a reference to the other regulator for its opinion, which would have to be indicated by the regulator, so addressed, in a time bound manner.

Construction of river valley project

†*334. SHRI LAXMINARAYAN SHARMA: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for increase in salinity of the soil in the regions of river valley projects constructed under First and Second Five Year Plans;

(b) the steps being taken to check it;

(c) whether situation will improve with the implementation of river linking projects; and

(d) if not, the reasons for not stopping the work on river linking projects?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN SOZ): (a) With the start of the planned irrigation development in the post independence era, farmers started using irrigation water in the irrigated commands. In areas, where drainage was not adequate, this resulted in the rise of ground water table and the seepage from unlined canals further contributed to the problem. The rise in ground water table brought the excessive harmful salts on the land surface causing salinity.

(b) Both preventive as well as ameliorative measures are being taken to check salinity. The preventive measures include lining of canals in vulnerable reaches, On-Farm development works such as construction of lined field channels and field drains, rotational supply (warabandi) of irrigation water to farmers, conjunction use of surface and ground water, propagation of improved methods of irrigation among farmers through training, adaptive trials and demonstrations.

Ameliorative measures include construction of surface and sub-surface drains, vertical drainage and bio-drainage for disposal of excess water and leaching of soils to flush out excess salts from root zone of crops.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The proposed interlinking of rivers is a part of National Perspective Plan formulated by Ministry of Water Resources and Central Water Commission in 1980 which would provide many benefits such as increase in irrigated area, generation of hydro power, flood moderation, navigation, water supply, pollution control and control of salinity.

† *Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.*